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INFO RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS IMMEDIATE  
RUCOGCA/NAVSTA GUANTANAMO BAY CU IMMEDIATE  
RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RHMFIASS/Joint STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RHMFIASS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL IMMEDIATE  
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L HAVANA 000207

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DEPT FOR WHA/CCA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/01/2017

TAGS: CU PGOV PHUM PINR PREL

SUBJECT: CUBAN POLICE BEAT UP PRO-DEMOCRACY ADVOCATES FOR  
DISTRIBUTING UN DECLARATION

Classified By: COM: M.E. Parmly : For reasons 1.4 b/d

¶1. (C) Summary: On March 1, police and members of Cuban state security confronted and beat 10 well known pro-democracy activists who were handing out copies of the UN Declaration of Human Rights in Central Havana. Some of the activists receive injuries. Police pushed those involved into cars, sending some who lived locally home immediately and detaining others for several hours before arranging transportation back to their home provinces of Santa Clara and Santiago de Cuba. All were released without charges. This incident follows immediately upon the lavish coverage in the state owned press about Cuba signing on February 28 two UN covenants regarding civic, educational and cultural rights. See action recommended at paragraph 8. End summary.

¶2. (C) At about 4:00 PM on March 1 Cuban police and security forces confronted 10 well known opposition leaders in Central Havana for distributing on the street copies of the UN Declaration of Human Rights. The activists were: Martha Beatriz Roque (MBR), Felix Antonio Bonne Carcasses, Idania Contreras, Guillermo "Coco" Farinas, Jose Luis Garcia Perez ("Antunez"), Luis Garcia Vega ("Lucas Garve"), Carlos Cordero Paez, Iris Perez, Jose Diaz Silva and his wife. The group had already walked for 5 blocks and had distributed over 5000 copies of the declaration. MBR reports that police grabbed her so forcefully that the ligaments in her arm were damaged. A doctor has put her arm in a sling to keep the limb immobilized. She states that a female officer kneed her in the stomach. MBR reports experiencing a great deal of pain. She also said that a police struck Farinas forcibly in the head. She said that a police officer struck Idania Contreras in the head and broke her glasses. According to MBR Idania's hand is badly swollen after she was roughed up.

¶3. (C) The police pushed the members of the group into automobiles. The majority, such as MBR, were brought immediately to their homes. Farinas and Contreras were held in the police station until about midnight after which police transported them home. All those involved have been released and to date no charges have been filed.

¶4. (C) MBR has organized walks over the past several months to distribute copies of the UN Declaration of Human Rights to people passing in the street. Earlier she was usually

accompanied by three or four colleagues and this is the first time with such a large group. On one recent occasion MBR walked for several kilometers passing out copies of the declaration without the authorities ever molesting her. In the past she has even handed out copies to uniformed police officers who did not try to impede her activities. (USINT has supplied thousands of copies of the UN Declaration to the Cuban public. The Dutch Embassy has also supplied Cuban civil society with many copies of this declaration.)

¶15. (C) The opposition has focused on the UN Declaration of Human Rights as a issue on which they are united. Since Cuba is a signatory to this document, all dissident groups see it as vital to inform the Cuban people of their rights. In the meantime, the state owned media has highlighted Cuba's signing on February 28 of two UN covenants regarding civic, educational and cultural rights as well as Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque visit to Geneva to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Dissidents take the portion of Roque speech before the UN that "Cuba reserves the right to interpret" these agreements to be a cynical posture that translates into more beatings and repression.

¶16. (C) Pro-democracy activists are very busy trying to respond to the new government of Raul Castro. Several of the most prominent figures in the dissident movement have been trying to formulate a new unity document. Bonne together with opposition lawyer Rene Gomez Manzano just wrote a letter to Raul Castro. The letter states that since Raul's speech of February 24 indicates the GOC should respect divergent points of view, Raul should meet with the peaceful opposition. The letter also states that Cuba should indicate that it will implement the UN Declaration of Human Rights.

¶17. (C) Post intends to continue to work closely with the dissident community and support efforts for the Cuban people to demand their rights. Post will meet with Susan McDade, local coordinator for the UN, as well as with a number of local embassies to work on ways to maintain the pressure on the GOC.

¶18. (C) Comment and Action Request: This incident illustrates all too clearly in which light the GOC regards any commitments to improve the human rights situation. The GOC even after giving maximum publicity to their involvement in the new UN Human Rights Council obviously feels that it can beat with impunity peaceful citizens who were only engaged in handing out an agreement that Cuba has signed. Post urges the Department to make a public statement condemning the incident and for the incident to receive attention in the testimony of A/S Shannon before the Congress on March 5. The US should reinforce strongly that the US is judging the Raul Castro government by its deeds, not its words. Doing so will send a clear signal of encouragement to the peaceful opposition.

PARMLY